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ABSTRACT

The role of working women in American labor history from colonial times to the present is the topic of this learning module. Intended predominantly as a course outline, the module can also be used to supplement courses in social, labor, or American history. Information is presented on economic and political influences, employment of women, immigration, women's efforts at labor organization, percentage of female workers at different periods, women in labor strikes, feminism, sex discrimination, maternity disability, and equality in the work place. The chronological narrative focuses on women in the United States during the colonial period, the Revolutionary War period, the period from nationhood to the Civil War, from the Civil War to 1900, from 1900 to World War I, from World War I to World War II, from World War II to 1960, and from 1960 through 1975. Each section is introduced by a paragraph or short essay that highlights the major events of the period, followed by a series of topics which are discussed and described by quotations, historical information, case studies, and accounts of relevant laws. A bibliography concludes the document. (Author/DB)

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Course Module

Women in American Labor History

by

Connie Kopelov

trade union women's studies

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New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations
A Statutory College of the State University at
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

WOMEN IN AMERICAN LABOR HISTORY

by

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This module includes a chronological narrative outline of the role of working women in American labor history from Colonial times to the present. It is designed for use in the classroom as a course outline for students focusing on the contributions of women in the development of the labor movement, or for teacher use to supplement courses in social, labor or American history. Author references in the text are listed in the bibliography at the end of the module.

Prepared especially for Working Women's Program for Research and Education, Cornell University, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, March 1976. This material may be reproduced provided acknowledgment is made to the source.

WOMEN IN AMERICAN LABOR HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Women have been left out of history and sadly neglected in economic and labor accounts over the years. Not only is this unfair to women, it distorts history and handicaps analysis of today's economic picture.

Justice demands that we tell the story of thousands of women, known and anonymous, who have struggled to win a better life for themselves and their families. To understand America's heritage, we need to examine the part women have played in the economy and the labor movement.

Women have always worked. Often they have been denied educational and training opportunities, ignored, or repressed in their efforts to resist exploitation, and used by employers to undercut the wages of men.

Long before the factory system, women were essential to economic production. It often was their efforts which created most of what a family could trade or sell. Domestic chores in a rural or pre-industrial environment remain today both necessary and economically rewarding. Only in today's non-rural setting does housework no longer produce cash income or goods for barter.

"Woman's place is in the home" is society's cry when jobs are scarce, as in post-war or depression periods. Throughout history it has been the cry of men who fear women's competition as cheap labor.

The myth is discarded by employers when it suits them to hire women. For example, during war time, women's work has always been welcomed and applauded. (Women were also applauded if they went home at the end of the war.) During war time, women performed all types of work including highly skilled jobs often denied them in peacetime.

Another example: when the division of labor reduced the skill and pay of jobs, women were urged to work outside the home. When unemployment or immigration created pools of cheap male workers, men were hired and women were again reminded that their place was in the home.

All of these factors have held back the unionization of women workers. Early unions refused to admit women and tried to keep them out of the work force. Gradually, male unionists began to recognize that they could not stop employers from hiring women and that women should be organized. Both the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor welcomed women but these early national organizations were succeeded by the craft-oriented American Federation of Labor (AFL). Since most women worked in factories, the AFL's lack of interest in organizing on an industrial basis left most women workers out of unions. The industrial base of the garment unions and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was crucial to women workers, but many of the industries and occupations in which women are concentrated today (needle trades, retail, clerical) are still poorly organized.

Black women have been in an even more perilous position. First, they were slaves; then mostly non-industrial workers in domestic and agricultural jobs; only slowly did employment opportunities open to them in industry and commerce. The fastest growing unions today are reaching many black women, especially in health and government jobs. Prominent black women union leaders have developed in such unions.

Today, (early 1975 figures), the 36 million women who work constitute 39% of the workforce; 46% of all women work; nine out of ten will work some time in their life. In 25 years --since 1950--the number of women in the workforce

has almost doubled and the number of married women who work has more than doubled. An estimated four to five million women are in unions, approximately 20% of union membership. Only 5% of top leadership positions in unions are held by women, though they are increasing their representation at lower levels.

Women, both as workers and wives, have played an active part in all the struggles of the labor movement. They, too, have organized, struck, suffered, and sometimes died for the union cause.

WOMEN IN COLONIAL AMERICA

The Colonial period, from the early English settlements to the American Revolution, provides a clear example of the economic value of women's work at home before the industrial revolution. Even in Colonial times, however, a small number of women worked outside the home.

Although the male English attitude toward "inferiors" such as women, blacks, and Indians became dominant in America, it is interesting to note that different traditions and cultures existed among Indians, blacks, and the Dutch. Even in Anglo-Saxon society in America the scarcity of women and the demands of frontier life, gave women here greater rights than in Europe at that time.

First Women in the U.S.

First women: 1) settlers' wives; or wives for planters whose passage often paid with tobacco by husbands-to-be

2) indentured servants who performed many tasks though generally not heavy field work; not allowed to marry without master's consent, often not then. (See Flexner, Smith)

Home As the Workplace (see Edith Abbot, Hechtlinger, Spruill)

Apart from child bearing and rearing, women's work included these home tasks:

Polish or sand floors
Keep linens spotless
Make candles, ointment, soap
Spin, weave, dye, sew and knit clothing
Embroider; make lace
Make flour
Dry and preserve fruits
Cultivate gardens

Whatever was not used was sold and traded, especially textiles, candles, stockings, soap, and some foodstuffs.

Work Outside the Home (see Edith Abbot, Dexter, Spruill)

Work outside the home included innkeeping, spinning, weaving, teaching, nursing, healing, midwifery, shop keeping ("she merchants"), printing, domestic work, and a scattering of trades.

Women printers: mostly wives and widows of printers; 10 published newspapers before 1776. (See Dexter, bibliography)

Examples: Dinah Nuthead, widow, licensed in Annapolis in 1696
Anne Franklin, Benjamin's sister-in-law, widowed in 1775; daughters were compositors; later ran Rhode Island newspaper "Newport Mercury" after editor, her son, died.
Anna Zenger, widow of John Peter Zenger, continued his press
Elizabeth Timothy, pioneer journalist; published "South Carolina Gazette" in 1738

Education

Boys: Reading, writing, cypering or indentured to learn a trade

Girls: Household and needle trade arts, spinning, weaving, some reading. Female indentures usually performed domestic tasks rather than being taught a trade.

Dutch vs. English Attitudes Toward Women (see DePauw)

English - did not recognize personal or property rights of married women

Dutch - women had right to own, control, inherit property, make contracts, run businesses (Dutch men were proud of this)

Indian and Black Women

Indian women - Older Indian women had tremendous influence and respect. Women carried on agricultural tasks including field work. (see DePauw)

Black women - First arrivals, 1619, indentured servants. Had rights, but were slowly stripped of them during next 40 years; slavery began to grow.
Female slaves in north - usually house servants
Female salves in south - field and house workers on rice, indigo, tobacco plantations.

Both women and blacks lost ground when English traditions, laws, and codes predominated after the American Revolution.

WOMEN IN REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA

Women participated in the agitation that preceded the Revolutionary War. They supported the war effort, ran farms and plantations, followed their Army husbands and lovers, even became combatants. (see DePauw, Booth)

Pre-War Participation

Daughters of Liberty - Helped organize and support boycott of British goods. Gave up tea and British fashions, made homespun linen, talked politics as they worked.

War Work

Supplied clothing, food, horses for the armies
Produced gun powder, held scrap drives
Ran farms and plantations

Camp Followers

Only economic choice for thousands. 20,000 may have become camp followers, Rebel and Tory. Most wives of free black soldiers had to accompany them. In south, black women with Army as slaves.

Washed, mended, cooked, nursed, foraged for food.

Women Also Fought

No one will ever know how many "beardless youths" might have been women. Examples of women combatants include:

Margaret Corbin - took husband's place at cannon when he was fatally wounded. Herself wounded, disabled, captured, later released. First woman army pensioner.

Molly Pitcher (Molly Ludwig Hays) - nicknamed for water jugs she took to soldiers. She joined the battle from time to time. "While in the act of reaching for a cartridge and having one of her feet as far before the other as she could step, a cannon shot from the enemy passed directly between her legs without doing any other damage than carrying away all the lower part of her petticoats." [1] Later, she was granted a pension for life.

Deborah Sampson - disguised herself as male, enlisted as Robert Shurtless. Born in Massachusetts, poor family, indentured to a farmer. After period of servitude, stayed with family, learned to read and write. As there was no Army physical exam and little bathing, she escaped detection despite being wounded twice. Later became ill with fever, was discovered, honorably discharged, and later received a small pension. After the war, to support her family, donned her old uniform, went on a lecture tour. When she died, her husband, Benjamin Gannett, received a monthly pension as a spounse of a disabled war veteran.

Women's Rights in New Constitution

Abigail Adams wrote husband John about the forthcoming Constitution urging the Founding Fathers to remember the ladies..."Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be Tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion..."[2]

1. Sally Smith Book, The Women of '76, Hastings House, New York, 1973, P. 174

2. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle, Harvard University Press, Boston, 1959, P. 15

FROM NATIONHOOD TO CIVIL WAR

The period from The 1790's to 1865 was one of great expansion in America. Commerce, industry, markets, and transportation grew. Pioneers, men and women, pushed west. Immigration continued and in mid 19th century, it reached its highest point relative to the population in all our nation's history.

The industrial revolution introduced factories which made employment of women and children outside the home attractive to owners. Men preferred and were skilled in crafts and agricultural pursuits. Women and children began to enter factories to produce goods previously made at home for sale or barter.

The factory's division of labor created unskilled jobs that women and children could easily fill. It reduced the skill content of work, degraded the craftsmanship of workmen and created low paid jobs. It was long after the fact that male workers accepted the reality of their relegation to a permanent working class, but women factory workers never had illusions about becoming owner-entrepreneurs.

For most of the period, labor organizations came and went. If employer opposition was too great, unions fell apart. If they won short term demands, they often dissolved after winning them. Thwarted by court decisions, unions turned to political reform and utopian notions which distracted workers from consolidating their organizations. Myths of rugged individualism and opportunity obscured working class reality.

During this period women formed their own unions and produced some extraordinary leaders. Unionism among women began in industries which did not employ many men. Primarily as a result of the development of low-skilled jobs, employers also began to hire women in jobs formerly held mainly by men. Unions tried to keep women out of these occupations, barring them from union membership and apprenticeships.

The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 spurred the slave trade. Although importing of slaves was banned in 1808, the need for slave labor continued. Slave breeding and an inter-state slave trade prospered.

This was a period when middle class women began to organize. A Declaration of Principles was adopted at a Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls in 1848. However, working women on strike in the earlier 1820's and '30's had invoked the cry of women's rights. Most women involved in the abolition movement advocated women's rights as well.

(See Andrews & Bliss, Flexner for material on women in unions throughout this period, Abbott for occupational data, Lerner's book on black women).

Early Factories

First factory workers - women and children, work previously done at home such as spinning, weaving, shoe binding

Other occupations of women - tailoresses, cigar makers, book binders, printers, umbrella workers. By 1840 women were found in 100 occupations.

The First Rumblings Among Women Workers, 1820's

1824 - Pawtuckett, Rhode Island, men and women weavers strike together

1825 - New York, Tailoresses, first women's union and first all-women's strike. Newspaper comment: "What next?"

1. John B. Andrews and W.D.P. Bliss, History of Women in Trade Unions, 1911 Arno Press Reprint, 1974, P. 21

1828 - July in Paterson, N.J., December in Dover, N.H.; textile workers, first strikes of factory women. Newspaper comment: "the female operatives ...exhibit the Yankee sex in a new and unexpected light."[1]

The Dover women struck against a number of regulations, especially a fine for lateness and a threatened black list. Banners, placards, poetry were used by the marchers. They also reportedly fired off gunpowder.

1830's and 1840's: More Women's Unions, More Strikes

Again, there were "turn-outs" (strikes): N.Y. Tailoresses (1831), Paterson (1835) and Dover (1834) textile workers. Textile workers also struck in Norristown, Chester Creek, and Manayunk, Pa.; Taunton, Springfield, Amesbury, Exeter, and Lowell, Mass. There were strikes by umbrella workers and book binders in New York; seamstresses in Baltimore; shoe binders in Philadelphia and Lynn, Mass. These strikes and others continued throughout the 1840's. Examples:

N.Y. Tailoresses (1831)

1831, New York; Lavinia Waight, union secretary spoke about female oppression; criticized by Boston Transcript as "clamorous and unfeminine declarations of personal rights which it is obvious a wise Providence never destined her to exercise."[2]

Textile Workers, Dover, N.H. (1834)

Cause: Wage Cut and company's effort to prevent spread of trade unionism by demanding an "ironclad oath" (agreement not to organize)

Tactics of strikers: No parades; Mass meetings and resolutions including one which protested news accounts considered insulting to daughters of freemen. "However freely the epithet of factory slaves may be bestowed upon us, we will never deserve it by a base and cringing submission to proud wealth or haughty insolence."[3]

Participation: 800 women. In touch with factory women in Lowell and other cities.

1. Andrews & Bliss, op. C.T. P.23
2. IBID P. 36
3. IBID P. 26

"Lowell, Wonderful Town of Spindles and Looms"

The events in Lowell are perhaps best known. Unlike the Rhode Island system begun in Slater's first mill (Pawtuckett, 1790) in which entire families were employed, the Lowell workers were mostly single daughters of New England farmers. Lowell was depicted as a model town. Mill girls lived in company boarding houses, their lives and morals closely supervised. They took part in educational and literary pursuits and published a journal, the Lowell Offering, which became an apologist for employer interests.

Overcrowded housing, speed-ups, long hours, low wages, and high rents dispelled the myth of Lowell as a model and brought strikes in the mid-1830's and 1840's.

1834 Lowell Strike:

Who: 800 women struck: number grew to 2,000.

Cause: Refused to accept wage cut; resolved all would go back or none would (or else forfeit $ 5.)

Tactics: "Marched about the town, to the amusement of a mob of idlers and boys...one of the leaders mounted a stump and made a flaming Mary Wollstonecraft speech on the rights of women and the iniquities of the 'monied aristocracy,' which produced a powerful effect on her auditors, and they determined to 'have their own way, if they died for it.'"[1]

Result: Failure

1836 Lowell strike

Cause: protested increase in rent at boarding houses and objected to dictatorship of their lives by mill owners.

Tactics: Parades, rallies, poems, one of which ended with "For I'm so fond of liberty that I cannot be a slave."[2]

Result: Defeat. In 1844, the Lowell mill workers turned to a new technique, the Female Labor Reform Association (FLRA) with Sarah Bagley as first president.

1. Andrews & Bliss, op. C.T. P. 27

2. IBID, P. 30

Sarah Bagley, First Major Woman Union Leader

FLRA achievements: Resisted speed-ups with some success; fought for ten-hour-day legislation; sent delegates to labor conventions; publicized their views in tracts, news articles, petition drives, and political campaigns, testified at state legislative hearings. Lowell group encouraged similar groups in other mill towns, kept in touch with them.

Sarah Bagley: organizer, speaker, editor (briefly) of The Voice of Industry, a widely read labor paper. Testified with several others from FLRA, before Massachusetts legislative hearing. Described conditions in the mill, urged protective laws, had considerable impact on public opinion. Committee buried their testimony. Despite lack of women's suffrage, FLRA campaigned against the committee chairman, William Schouler, Lowell newspaper publisher, and he was defeated. He retaliated, initiated smear campaign that discredited Ms. Bagley and the FLRA. She later became the first woman telegrapher.

Immigrants Replace Original Lowell Workers

By mid-century the Lowell farmers' daughters moved west and were replaced by immigrant women. Women's textile unions declined.

Daughters of St. Crispin

A spectacular strike of shoe workers took place in Lynn, Mass. in 1860. Despite a snowstorm, 5,000 men and 1,000 women marched through the streets. 1,800 women held a mass meeting and formed the Daughters of St. Crispin, the only women's trade union organization on a national basis. By December, there were 24 lodges in Mass., Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and California.

Black Women (See Bennett, Lerner on Black Women)

The life of slave women was generally worse than that of men. They did similar work but women also bore and reared children. Neither pregnancy nor motherhood interfered with punishment. Sexual exploitation and slave breeding were common. A few slave women were rented out for low level jobs in tobacco plants. Free black women worked as domestics, washerwomen, seamstresses.

Two extraordinary black women who devoted their lives to freedom for their people were Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

Harriet Tubman (1820-1913)

Early life - born a slave, Eastern Shore of Maryland. Always a rebel who dreamed of escape. At 13, when aiding an escaping slave, she suffered a head injury that bothered her the rest of her life. She married a free black but after her escape in 1849, he remarried.

Leading slaves to freedom - during the next ten years, this "Moses of her people" made 19 daring and dangerous trips back to slave territory to bring over 300 slaves to freedom. Bold, courageous, and ingenious, she never lost a "passenger" on the Underground Railroad. She worked as a cook, maid, and laborer in the north to get money for her rescue efforts. She was also a major Abolitionist speaker.

Civil War and after - served as spy, scout, nurse, commando; inspired and led a brilliant Union raid by a black unit in 1863. There was little financial compensation from the government during and after the war. She used all the money she earned, begged, and scraped together to help black people.

Sojourner Truth (1797-1893)

Early life - Born Isabella Baumfree, slave, in New York; had five children; freed in 1817. Dared to sue in court for her son's freedom and won! She became a mystic, renamed herself Sojourner Truth and began to roam the countryside as a preacher-prophet. She was the first black anti-slavery speaker and was an advocate of women's rights. Nearly six feet tall, she was regal and eloquent.

1852 Akron, Ohio Women's Suffrage meeting - made her famous reply to a man who said "women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches..."[1] She noted she never had such help, and demanded to know "And Ain't I a Woman? ...I have plowed and planted...And Ain't I a Woman?"[1]

Civil War years - nursed soldiers; called on Lincoln; sat-in on "white" street cars, Washington, D.C.

Post-war year - worked with the Freedman's Bureau providing job training for black women; advocated land reform and black colonies in the West.

1. Bennett, Lerone, Pioneers of Protest, Johnson Pub. Co., 1968 P. 124-25

CIVIL WAR TO THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Women continued their efforts to organize during this period. Like early unions of men, theirs lacked continuity and suffered, with all unions, from the severe depression of 1873-78. Yet, the Daughters of St. Crispin, Troy Collar Laundry Workers, Capmakers, and women cigarmakers could point to several successes in winning better working conditions.

Among male unionists, support began to develop for women's unions as well as for the admittance of women to unions and labor organizations. Cigarmakers and printers, however, were the only two unions to admit women.

The National Labor Union encouraged women to join it; the Knights of Labor organized women and black workers, and for the first time, thousands became union members. Women delegates made distinct contributions as lodge presidents and at Knights of Labor Conventions. Women unionists came into prominence in the NLU, the Knights, and in individual unions.

At the time of the emergence of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), more unions were beginning to accept women as members. These unions were apt to be stronger than was possible for most individual women's unions. The price women paid for progress against discrimination, however, was loss of the leadership and influence they had achieved through their own female unions.

The AFL, primarily a federation of craft unions, had little interest in organizing unskilled workers and most women in the workforce were unskilled. AFL resolutions in support of organizing women and winning equal pay for women for equal work remained mostly that -- little money or time were spent to implement them. Some Federal locals of women were chartered, but the appointment of a woman organizer in 1892 lasted only a few months.

Leading feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were interested in unionism for women; both were delegates to the first NLU Convention in 1868. Efforts to see that the Constitutional rights granted to black men after the Civil War would also be extended to women, black and white, failed. Women were told it was "the Negro's Hour" and they must wait. Their turn did not come until more than a half century later. During the latter part of the century, a number of women reformers devoted their efforts to publicizing the plight of working women and pressing for protective legislation. Most of the suffrage movement, however, did not relate to working women at that time. In fact, during the final decade of the 19th Century, the suffrage movement became conservative and anti-alien, while much of the working class were immigrant.

(See Andrews and Bliss, Flexner, for material on women in unions, Lerner's Black Women in White America, Abbott, Meltzer, for occupational data, Costello and Feldstein, Meltzer on immigrants.)

Civil War and Its Aftermath

During the war - Women served as nurses, couriers, spies, disguised soldiers.
Many more women entered factories.
War widows turned to sewing trades to earn a pittance.

After the war - 1867: 50,000 unemployed workers in New York City alone.
New immigrants added to glut of needle trade workers.
Needle trade wages, always among lowest, dropped further.
Many women lived in cellars and "tenement pens", working night and day to eke out an existence.

Women Continue to Organize

Tailoresses, seamstresses, umbrella sewers, saleswomen, cap makers, cigar makers, textile workers, printers, laundresses, shoe workers, and others organized unions in various cities.

Most national unions refused to admit women. First to do so: Cigar Makers Union in 1867 and Typographical Union in 1869.

August Lewis and Women's Typographical Union, Local 1

Attitude of male printers - feared competition of women and employer exploitation of them. (In 1856, Boston printers seriously considered expelling any member found working with female compositors.) Could not stop employers from training and hiring women. Began to change to policy of equal pay and union-

ization. In 1869-70 several locals admitted women.

Augusta Lewis - woman printer in her early 20's, known for her skill; organized a Working Women's Association (Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony initiated the first gathering of the Association). With support from the International Typographical Union, Local 6, New York, the Association became Women's Local No. 1 with Lewis as president. The 1869 printer's convention granted a charter, noting that despite all inducements, not one woman in the local had scabbed. At the 1870 Convention, Lewis was elected corresponding secretary of the national union, the first woman to win such a post in any union, and she performed admirably.

1871 report by Lewis on printing industry included a bitter comment: that women refused to scab but then could not get work because of discrimination by union foremen. "It is the general opinion of female compositors that they are more justly treated by what is termed 'rat' foremen, printers, and employers than they are by union men." [1]

1874 - Lewis married, moved, and left Women's Typographical Local No. 1. By 1878 it went out of existence; its members joined the Typographical Union on the same basis as men.

The National Labor Union (NLU) and Women Workers

1866 - founded by William Sylvis; opened its doors to women and, in 1869, to blacks.
1868 - NLU Congress backed equal pay for women; appointed Kate Mullaney from the Troy Collar Laundry Union as assistant secretary and rational organizer for women.

Kate Mullaney and the Troy Collar & Laundry Union

Troy Collar Laundry Union - organized under leadership of Kate Mullaney in Troy, New York, center of cuff and collar manufacturing and laundry industry.

1863 - First strike by Troy Collar and Laundry Union; by 1866 pay had been boosted to range of $8 to $14 weekly; that year the union showed its strength and dedication to unionism by contributing $1,000 to striking Troy iron molders and $500 to striking New York bricklayers.

1869 - Employers refused demands of laundresses; a bitter strike ensued. Women received help from unions and other organizations; 7,000 attended a mass meeting to support the strike. Despite all this aid, the union was crushed. This happened partly because of the threat of a paper collar, partly because the untimely death of William Sylvis threw the labor movement into confusion. An attempt to set up a cooperative laundry also failed and the Troy union dissolved.

The Panic of 1873

1873 - beginning of years of severe depression; hundreds of thousands of workers were unemployed, many made homeless, their unions smashed. Women and children suffered enormously. The Knights of Labor began, secretly at first.

[1] As quoted in Flexner, op. cit., p. 136

Knights of Labor

Knights of Labor - organized men and women, black and white; backed equal pay for women for equal work.

1880's - thousands of women joined Knights' Assemblies, whether those that included both sexes or the 113 women's assemblies organized by 1886.

1885 - Knights' Convention set up a Woman's Department to "investigate the abuses to which our sex is subjected by unscrupulous employers." [1]

1886 - Leonora Barry appointed full time head of the Woman's Department.

Leonora Barry

Early life - young widow with children; went to work in a hosiery mill, Amsterdam, New York; joined the Knights; went to the 1886 Knights Convention as a delegate; appointed Woman's Department director.

1886-1889 - organized women workers, lectured, investigated women's work conditions in hundreds of cities, made detailed reports. During one eleven month period she received "537 applications for my presence, 213 of which have been filled." [2] At a time when travel was difficult, especially for a woman, Barry had dedication and determination.

As factors contributing to women's low wages and organizing difficulties, Barry cited their timidity, their expectation of marriage, and the lack of job training, but added, "much blame can be attached to the neglect and indifference of their brother toilers." [3] Her remarriage ended her career and the Women's Department.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Its Impact on Women

AFL - unlike the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor, it was basically a federation of unions; composed mostly of white, male, skilled craft workers; local autonomy permitted continuation of unions' discriminatory policies against women and blacks.

Attitude toward women - on record favoring unionization of women workers and equal pay for women for equal work; in practice, did little about it. Believed unskilled workers in general and women in particular were transient workers at their workplace and both difficult and useless to organize.

Advantages to women of admittance to unions - existing unions had the strength of greater size and national or regional scope of operations. Unions began to develop more continuity and improved ability to function as modern unions. Men and women were no longer as isolated at work as had been true during the early stages of the industrial revolution; labor unity brought advantages to both men and women.

1 Andrews and Bliss, op. cit., p. 116
2 As quoted in Flexner, op. cit., p. 197
3 Andrews and Bliss, op. cit., p. 117

Disadvantages - women's unions declined, women no longer could run their own show, develop leadership skills, determine their own bargaining demands. Early women's unions had given women a moment in the sun - - often a brilliant one - - at a time when their occupations and leadership role offered little threat to male egos either at the workplace or in the unions.

Women Workers at Pullman (See Carwardine)

Pullman workers went on strike in 1894 when drastic wage cuts (but no rent reductions on their company houses) made survival perilous. Pullman provoked intervention by Federal troops, broke the strike, and destroyed the American Railway Union.

Kind of work - made, repaired, and laundered linens, drapes, carpets, and other items used in Pullman cars; in 1894 some earned as little as 6¢ an hour.

Role in strike - Seamstress Jennie Curtiss led the women strikers and testified with passion and bitterness of company policies.

Reform Organization in the Gilded Age

By 1890 - extremes of wealth and poverty were awesome.

Reform movements developed - women's protective associations, Consumer League, settlement houses, working girls clubs; they fought for protective legislation, educational reforms, health improvements at workplaces, factory inspections.

Black Women After the Civil War (Forten, Lerner's books, Lockwood)

Slaves were freed, oppression went on -- agricultural peonage, Black Codes, rape of black women, lynching of black women as well as men, all this and more made the lives of ex-slaves a nightmare.

Freedmen's Bureau - Nearly half the 9,000 teachers in schools set up by the Freedmen's Bureau were women, a number of them black women. Charlotte Forten, member of a wealthy, free black family that was active for generations in the Civil War in an educational experiment that was a forerunner of the Freedmen's Schools. The struggle for educational opportunity continued after the Bureau's demise. Black women set up clubs which tried to improve the lives of black people. Black leaders such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell were key figures in these struggles and campaigns.

Work - Except for southern tobacco and textile industries, black women worked primarily as domestics, laundresses, tenant farmers, and sharecroppers. The few jobs they got in industry were usually the dirtiest, lowest paid, and least skilled. Most unions were closed to blacks.

1900 to World War I

By 1900 America had become the richest country in the world and the power of monopolies and robber barons provoked both liberal and radical reactions. The Socialist movement led by Eugene Debs and the rise of the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World - IWW) testify to this. Public concern grew over "sweatshops"

and other examples of the exploitation of workers.

The Women's Trade Union League, formed in 1903, brought leisure class reformers and working women together. The WTUL provided crucial support in numerous strikes involving women during its first decade and fought for protective legislation.

Woman's suffrage gained greater acceptance as a result of its potential for enlarging the voting power of liberal forces. The suffrage movement became more active - and more effective - in the cities as it joined hands with many in the labor movement in a sharing of goals.

By 1901, union membership in the U.S.reached 1.5 million. 20% of the workforce were now women. The growth of unionism among women workers at the beginning of the century was slowed for a time by increasing employer resistance and was diluted by massive waves of immigrants (13 million, 1900-14). Unionism among women then gained momentum, especially as a result of the struggle of garment and clothing workers, themselves immigrants and predominently female.

During these years a number of struggles and organizing drives involved women: meatcutters ("petticoat butchers"), waitresses, and teachers in Chicago; textile and boot and shoe workers, Massachusetts; tobacco workers (including a black local in Richmond, Virginia), laundresses in Troy and San Francisco; fur workers in New York.

A major strike in men's clothing began in Chicago in 1910 when Bessie Abramowitz (later Hillman) and other women pants workers walked out. 40,000 joined them in a bitter strike which was aided by the WTUL. The 1910 clothing strike laid the ground work for the formation of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) which broke away from the United Garment Workers, a craft-oriented union that refused to organize industrially. Bessie Hillman was one of several

women who served as ACWA international vice-presidents.(see Josephson, Henry)

Formation of the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) (Flexner, Henry, Lerner on Women, Andrews & Bliss)

Founded: 1903, at time of AFL Convention in Boston

Membership: Leisure class women and trade union women

Purpose: Encourage women to join unions and male unionists to help organize them; fight for protective legislation (spurred on by 1911 tragic Triangle Shirtwaist fire and its death toll of 146 women); carry out union education programs for women.

Union Women in Leadership: Mary Anderson, Emma Steghagen, shoe workers; Rose Schneiderman, capmakers; Agnes Nestor and Elizabeth Cristman, glovemakers (both served as Secretary-Treasurer of Gloveworkers International, Nestor became President); Melinda Scott, hat trimers; Josephine Casey, railway ticket takers; Stella Franklin, department store clerks; Elizabeth Maloney, waitresses; Maud Schwartz, typographers; Leonora O'Reilly, formerly collar workers; Mary Kenny O'Sullivan, bookbinders.

Relationship to AFL: Uneasy. Though applauded at times, generally kept at arm's length by AFL President Gompers and never fully accepted or supported by the labor movement despite their enormous aid to major strikes involving women.

Uprising of the 20,000: New York Shirtwaist Strike, 1909-1910 (Flexner, Levine, Schneiderman)

September, 1909: several ILGWU shops in the women's garment industry struck

November, 1909: mass meeting at Cooper Union. Teenage workers Clara Lemlich electrified audience with demand for a general strike.

Response of women workers: thousands joined the strike; their militancy, loyalty, courage, and endurance proved that women - and immigrants - could be organized. Two women activists, then teenagers, Pauline Newman and Rose Schneiderman, went on to leadership roles in the union and the labor movement.

Role of WTUL: raised funds, provided legal and bail aid, ran relief kitchens and strike headquarters, held rallies, took the strikers' case to the public, walked picket lines, were arrested, won their spurs with the labor movement.

Result of strike: ended in February. Most shops agreed to cut hours and grant some other demands but refused to recognize the union or a union shop. Set the stage for a 1910 strike by the ILGWU which made further gains.

Role of Women in Lawrence Textile Strike, 1912 (Flynn, Dubofsky, Meltzer, Kornbluh)

The Lawrence textile strike showed once again that women and immigrants could be organized. The International Workers of the World (IWW), known as Wobblies, had made contact with the Lawrence workers preceding the strike. When it erupted, they were in a position to lead it.

Beginning of the strike - wages were cut; Polish women were the first to walk out.

Tactics - many parades and demonstrations, despite frequent beatings and jailings of men, women and children by the police. Annie Lo Pezzi was shot and killed in a demonstration.

Strike meetings were organized by language groups; special meetings of women and children were set up, often led by IWW leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

Moving the children to safety - a plan was devised to send children to be cared for by sympathizers in other cities. Companies determined to stop this and the unfavorable publicity it created. At their behest, police went to the railroad station to stop a scheduled departure of children. They beat mothers and children and kept the children off the train. The national hue and cry that followed helped pressure the companies to settle.

Mother Jones (Mary Harris Jones) 1830-1930 (See Parton)

One of the most courageous and colorful labor leaders in all our history, she spent fifty years in mining villages, mill towns, and other industrial towns battling the bosses to win economic justice for workers. Undaunted by threats, jailings, (one of them at age 83), and harassment, her philosophy was "Pray for the dead and fight like Hell for the living."

Early life - married a union man; in 1867 he and their four children perished in a yellow fever epidemic. She went to Chicago, earned her living as a seamstress, and joined the Knights of Labor in 1871.

The next 50 years - organized for the Knights and became a walking delegate for the United Mine Workers of America during various struggles in the 1890's and early 20th Century. She clashed with union leadership from time to time, was friendly with Eugene Debs and with the Wobblies (IWW).

Highlights - Greenburg, Pennsylvania miners strike (1910): women were arrested for jeering at scabs; she urged them to take their babies to jail, sing all night; the women kept everyone in town awake for days and were finally released.

Textile strike, Kensington, Pa. 1903: organized a children's crusade through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and into New York to publicize the terrible life of children in the mills. In Princeton she asked for and got permission to speak on higher education. Then she said that the rich robbed the mill children of any education in order to "send their sons and daughters to places of higher education...".[2] Pointing to a stooped, ten-year-old boy, she told of his ten hour day in a carpet factory for $3 per week "while the children of the rich are getting their higher education."[3]

1 Parton, Mary Field, ed., The Autobiography of Mother Jones (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1925-1972) p. 41

2 Ibid, p. 76

3 Ibid, P. 77

FROM WAR TO WAR: LEAN YEARS, DEPRESSION, INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM

As is true in all wars, World War I produced job opportunities for women and minorities although black women working for the Federal government during the war were segregated at the workplace. Most facilities in the nation's capital were segregated until the 1940's and 50's.

In 1920, after a century of great effort, frustration, and disappointment, women won the right to vote. That same year saw the establishment of the U. S. Women's Bureau, one of the objectives of the Women's Trade Union League. The Women's Bureau became an invaluable instrument in gathering data on the status of women.

In 1919 telephone operators in Boston carried out a successful strike which won support from the linemen and tied up communications in New England. Women [illegible] in the 1919 steel strike and "men have admitted that women make by far the best pickets."[1]

For the most part, unionism among women in the 1920's - the lean years - lost ground as it did for all workers. A major but unsuccessful thrust of unionism took place among southern textile workers in 1929 and involved thousands of women. 1934 saw a nationwide general strike of hundreds of thousands of textile workers.

The pain and hardship of the depression were of staggering dimension. There were cases of starvation. Unions lost members as industry shut down. In the early '30's, strikes were defensive and most were failures. The American Federation of Labor continued to refuse to organize industrial rather than craft unions.

Even before passage of the National Labor Relations Act (1935), New Deal legislation spurred union organizing efforts, especially in the needle trades.

[1] Life and Labor, November, 1919, p. 275-276

The formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had its greatest impact on heavy industries such as auto, rubber, and steel. Although these workers were primarily male, women workers and strikers' wives were in the thick of these struggles. Organizing drives also had successes in female intensive industries such as textile, laundries, cleaning establishments, needle trades, and among retail and clerical workers.

By 1940, women were found in all except nine of a total of 451 occupations but were concentrated in only 23 occupations. Union organizing efforts still did not reach out to millions of women who worked in service, clerical, retail, and low-wage manufacturing industries.

Textile Struggles, 1929-30 (See Bernstein, Tippett)

Locations of strikes - Elizabethton, Tennessee; Gastonia, Marion, and Greensboro, North Carolina; Danville, Virginia. Mill workers struck to protest the stretch out and the frustration and agony of mill life.

Elizabethton - 500 women began the strike, March 12, 1929; 3,000 workers were out by morning; the women called in the United Textile Workers of America (UTW). The company promised to meet many of the workers' demands but after the workers returned to their jobs, the company began a reign of terror. The workers had to accept an inadequate settlement.

Gastonia - A strike in April, 1929 was led by the National Textile Worker Union, a communist union. There was considerable violence, initiated by vigilantes and local sheriffs. A truck carrying unionists to a meeting was ambushed and Ella May Wiggins, millworker, union activist, and labor song writer, was murdered. This strike was also lost.

Marion - Though this strike was led by the non-communist UTW, company and town officials treated it with the same repression and violence as in Gastonia. A number of strikers were killed and the strike lost.

Textile Struggles, 1934 (See Brecher)

Summer and Fall, 1934 - thousands of textile workers joined the United Textile Workers of America; mill owners ignored government codes governing mill conditions; the union voted a nationwide strike; by September, 400,000 were out.

Response - national guardsmen, armed vigilantes, lynch mobs, and local police mobilized against the strikers in New England and the South. Strikers in the south retaliated with flying squadrons that spread the strike from town to town. Major confrontations took place in the north and south. Despite the fervor of the workers, they were no match for the employers

and their array of local force. The strike lost.

It was not until the Textile Workers Organizing Committee was set up in 1937 with heavy commitment of funds and organizers from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America that major inroads were made in organizing the mills.

Shirtworkers campaigns, Pennsylvania, 1933-34 (Josephson, ACWA General Executive Board Report, 50th Anniversary Convention, 1964)

Depression conditions were deplorable; wives and children of jobless miners worked long hours - 60 to 70 - at pay as low as $2 or less per week. The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) mounted organizing drives in 1933-34 which organized thousands of workers despite bitter and often violent employer resistance. Community and citizen support contributed to the success of the campaigns.

Baby strikers, Allentown, 1933 - most strikers were under 16; testimony at State Senate hearings revealed pathetic conditions; one 14 year old girl earned 10¢ for two full weeks' work.

Shamokin, 1933 - young female strikers walked six miles to a nearby non-union shop and secured jobs; once inside, they produced strike banners and brough the shop out on strike.

Elizabethville, 1934 - a member of the United Mine Workers aiding pickets was killed; a female ACWA organizer was beaten and hospitalized; police armed with tear gas, shotguns, and baseball bats failed to break up a picket line made up mostly of women and young girls. The strike was won.

Sitdowns and Sit-Ins (Vorse, Brecher)

Women workers were part of such CIO campaigns as those in rubber, steel, aluminum, and auto. Strikers' wives were a key element in many women's support groups; their backing was crucial to strikers' morale; some women's auxiliaries included black women.

Women's Emergency Brigades - set up by women workers and strikers' wives in Flint, Detroit, and Lansing auto organizing drives; ran first aid, took food to sitdowners in the plant, organized day care for striking mothers; vowed, as Flint leader Genora Johnson put it, "to protect our husbands." [1]

Dime Store Sit-Ins, New York, March, 1937
Sit-ins by dime store workers, 80% female, closed 13 stores for two weeks; they won a contract. The union patrolled the stores; blankets, cots, food were passed in; famous entertainers gave shows; on Palm Sunday both Passover and Easter were observed provoking newspaper sneers about Reds and religion.

[1] Mary Heaton Vorse, Labor's New Millions, Modern Age Books, Inc. 1938, Arno Press Reprint, 1969, p. 77

WORLD WAR II to 1960

During World War II the number of women in the workforce and in unions expanded dramatically. In 1940 there were 13 million women workers, 800,000 of whom were in unions. By 1944 there were 19 million women workers with three million in unions.

War-time needs provided an opportunity - even an obligation - for women to perform jobs in occupations and industries previously monopolized by male workers. Now women ran lathes, cut dies, read blueprints, built ships and planes, worked as welders, drill-press operators, lumberjacks, crane operators, and hundreds of other traditionally male jobs. Women who had not worked before as well as women who had previously been relegated to menial jobs entered defense plants and government offices. For black women especially the war offered a dramatic change in job opportunity. For example, domestic employment declined by 400,000.

The vast increase of working women during the war had an impact still felt today. Women demonstrated their ability to do all kinds of work; their earnings increased; training opportunities expanded; many more women became union members. Although most Rosie the Riveters lost their jobs in heavy industry at the war's end and went home to be wives and mothers, hundreds of thousands remained in the work force. Often they had to take lower paying jobs. Today a whole generation and more has grown up in families with a working mother as a role model. This has influenced behavior patterns of all the family members. The seemingly sudden rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960's is partly due to a blending of feminist theory with economic reality that has made past myths of woman's place inadequate in today's society.

By 1960, one-third of the work force were women (23 million). More wives and more mothers worked full-time. These trends have continued and the momentum quickened in the '70's.

(See Chafee, Smuts, Lerner on black women)

1960-1975

Today, 36 million women -- 46 percent of all women -- work. Two of every five workers are female. Most are married, millions are the mothers of small children. Half of all mothers of school age children work. Nine out of ten women will work some time in their life and will average 25 years in the workforce. Women workers' earnings in 1973 were only 57 per cent of men's; in 1955, they were 64 percent.

The pattern of job opportunity and union growth since 1960 have been of crucial importance to women. Until the recent recession, jobs in health, education, and state and local government -- all fields with high rates of female and minority employment -- have expanded. These have also been the major areas of union growth. The union struggles of California farm workers and Chicanos in Texas have involved thousands of women. During the past 15 years a large number of women have organized and have become leaders in their unions and in the labor movement.

Over 20 percent of trade unionists are women and account for at least half the membership in 25 unions. 31 million women workers remain unorganized. Only seven percent of top union leadership is female. More women are moving up in the ranks of labor, however, A number of international union vice-presidents are female; women serve as president of three unions; and many others hold important middle echelon posts.

The rebirth of feminism has touched the lives of all women. Laws banning discrimination on the basis of sex have had profound effects on working women, bringing about new job and promotion opportunities and improved pay for many thousands of women. However, supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment have not as yet succeeded in winning Constitutional recognition of women's equality.

In 1974, trade union women, pointing to the slow pace in achieving equality, organized the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) to press for women's rights on the job, in their unions, and in society. CLUW's formation was an historic event, the first time women unionists set up their own organization. Its intent is to work within the framework of unions to achieve CLUW's goals. By the end of 1975, its membership exceeded 5,000 unionists in 41 local chapters.

CLUW's success will rest on its ability to overcome initial organizing problems, reach out to a greater number of women unionists, and chart a course to win union acceptance without sacrificing its purpose of operating as a pressure group. CLUW's emphasis or programs such as child care, maternity and pregnancy benefits, and other concrete goals demonstrates a potential to affect the lives of all women.

The current depression and growing imports have hit working women and minorities especially hard. Employment is down in industries such as apparel, textile, and electronics. The crisis of cities is affecting employment opportunities for thousands of women. Those women and blacks who only recently obtained jobs in traditionally white, male occupations have often been the first to be laid off. It must be recognized, on the other hand, that seniority systems have also preserved the jobs of many women and minorities.

WOMEN IN AMERICAN LABOR HISTORY

Putting America back to work is of supreme importance to the working women of this nation.

(See Schwartz; Sexton; Handbook on Women Workers, Chartbook on working women)

Growth of Unionism and Its Impact on Women Workers

Since the early '60's, there has been an enormous growth of unionism in the field of health care, among state, local, and Federal government workers, teachers and school paraprofessionals, and farm workers. This has contributed to the increase in the number of women unionists and to the rise by many women to prominence in the labor movement. In addition to AFL-CIO unions, the American Nurses Association and the National Education Association increasingly engage in collective bargaining.

In a single decade, a million government workers joined unions. There are now approximately three million unionized government workers; the total moves up faster than statistic-keepers can tabulate. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), a major organizer of government workers, has many women in leadership positions. One of these is Lillian Roberts, Associate Director for Organization of District Council 37, AFSCME, New York City. She first became involved in AFSCME in Chicago (she was a hospital workers), before coming to DC 37 as Division Director for hospital workers in 1965.

Organizing of Hospital Workers

Thousands of hospital workers throughout the country, a large percentage of them women and minorities, have joined unions during the last two decades. Among the unions which have brought this about is the National Union of Health Care Employees, known as District 1199; it now represents 90,000 service,

maintenance, and technical workers; 65-70 percent are female.

Hospital Workers Strike, New York City, 1959 - 3,500 workers in seven New York hospitals struck for 46 days. Some earned as little as $34 per week; work weeks were 44 hours or more; many qualified for supplemental welfare. The city's labor movement and every segment of the civil rights movement gave support. Their 1974 contract includes a minimum of $181 per week.

Doris Turner, a dietary clerk and 1959 strike leader, is now Executive Vice-President and Director of the Hospital Division, one of the highest union posts held by a woman or a black.

United Farm Workers Battle to Unionize

The historic and heroic fight of the United Farm Workers is unmatched in recent labor history as is the depth and breadth of support it has won from a cross section of labor, civic, religious, civil rights, political, and student groups.

The Organizing Struggle - Led by Cesar Chavez, began in 1962; in 1965, a four-year, nation-wide boycott of grapes culminated in a number of contracts. Followed by lettuce campaign and boycott; conflict with the Teamsters; enactment of a now-imperiled California state law intended to end violence, provide a peaceful method of handling farm labor disputes.

Farm Worker Women - major component of union activists including UFW vice-president Dolores Huerta. Formerly school teacher, joined Chavez in 1962; has organized, negotiated; promoted the boycott, inspired women both in UFW and throughout the country; mother of ten children.

A tough negotiator, she says, "It's hard for them -- the growers -- to negotiate with a woman...it throws them...a woman can be much more tenacious than a man, women are not as ego-involved...for women, it's easier to maneuver a little bit...and as a woman, I can cry...Men certainly use their physical strength, right? And there's nothing wrong with women using whatever strengths they have." For example, "women are very involved on the picket line, with their children. That brings an element of decency to the whole struggle and I think women should use that." [1]

Breakthrough for Mexican-American Industrial Workers: The Farah Strike, 1972-74

One of the most dramatic struggles in recent labor history, the strike of Mexican-American workers at the Farah Company not only won an Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) contract, it won "dignidad" for the strikers

[1] Philadelphia Inquirer, January 30, 1974

and gave hope to oppressed Chicanos throughout the southwest. To win, it took 22 months on the picket line, a national boycott, a battling Bishop, and a determined union.

The Scene - multiple plants, mostly in El Paso and San Antonio, of Farah Company, world's largest pants manufacturer; El Paso, non-union town in an open-shop state; its Mexican-American minority experiencing poverty, unemployment, discrimination in jobs, schools, housing, and most other aspects of their lives; one El Paso factory alone employed 7,500 Chicanos, mostly women, in plant nearly a mile long, surrounded by barbed wire fences.

The Strike - after several years of organizing, an NLRB victory among cutters, and scores of unfair labor practices, strike began spontaneously in May, 1972, when union activists in San Antonio were fired; strike spread to El Paso; company got injunction limiting picketing; in El Paso over 1,000 strikers arrested, some at midnight in their homes; bail set at $400 instead of usual $25; picket line patrolled for a time by Farah guards with police dogs.

The Boycott - national boycott organized by ACWA; like grape and lettuce boycotts, supported by wide range of groups. In one city, in a department store demonstration in December, even Santa Claus joined the line.

Role of the Catholic Church - the Bishop of El Paso and the local priest, most of whose parishioners worked at Farah's plants, backed strikers and boycott to limit; Bishop pointed out that only a boycott could win such a strike.

Victory - in early 1974, Farah capitulated. A number of strikers, men and women, became ACWA organizers, servicing representatives, and labor education directors.

Textile Union Wins a Few

For years the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) has been shut out of major organizing breakthroughs in the south or forced into doomed strikes by bitterly anti-union southern textile companies. In 1973, TWUA won its first organizing strike in 17 years at the Oneita Knitting Co., won a 1974 election (but not a contract) among 3600 J. P. Stevens workers, and came close to winning an election among Cannon millworkers in the company town of Kannapolis, N.C. in 1974. (In June, 1976 TWUA and Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America conventions will vote on a proposal to merge the two unions.)

Oneita strike - 1,000 workers (85% women, 75% black), mostly sharecroppers in tobacco fields before landing their first industrial job at Oneita, in Andrews and Lane, S.C. Late 1971, TWUA won an NLRB election; in January, 1973, embarked on six month strike to win a contract and succeeded, helped by a consumer boycott. Flossie Gibson, who sews undershirt sleeves, wrote a song, "Contract, Contract", sung by strikers and featured in a textile film of the same name, about the strike.

J.P. Stevens - world's second largest textile employer, 89 plants, 46,000 workers, major violator of law with hundreds of NLRB and court charges against them, including three Federal contempt citations; 289 Stevens workers fired during organizing efforts; $ 1 1/2 million in back pay ordered; also cited for violations of laws on sex and race discrimination. TWUA organizing drive made a major breakthrough with a substantial victory among 3,600 workers at Roanoke Rapids plant in late 1974; more than a year later, there was still no contract. Union plans a massive boycott; AFL-CIO promises aid if the boycott is launched.

Laws Banning Sex Discrimination (see Department of Labor publications)

Laws on sex discrimination have had considerable impact on blue-collar women both in terms of individual cases, class action suits, and uncontested compliance with the law. The Equal Pay Act and the Civil Rights Act are the key laws.

Equal Pay Act of 1963 - provides equal pay for equal work; clarified by Supreme Court in 1970, jobs must be "substantially equal" though not necessarily identical. Since its inception its has resulted in more than $100 million in back pay.

Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964 - bans job discrimination based on sex (as well as race and other discriminatory categories) by employers, unions, employment agencies.

Women in non-traditional jobs - Women now found in almost every occupation. 1970 figures showed 350,000 women carpenters, painters, telephone installers, auto mechanics, construction laborers, and other traditionally male trades. Another 125,000 held blue collar supervisory jobs. In 1976, Bethlehem Steel noted that of 88 women in their coal divisions, 80 worked underground. United Mine Workers reported 206 female coal miners.

Maternity Disability Benefit - A 1976 decision is expected from the Supreme Court in a case brought by the International Union of Electrical Workers which argues that women temporarily disabled because of pregnancy or maternity should receive the same disability benefit as do men for their temporary disabilities.

Despite these gains, women have a long way to go to achieve equality in the workplace. This is one reason for the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) which is designed to win equal treatment on the job and a partnership role in unions, politics, and society.

Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) (see Sexton, Jacobson)

Founded - Chicago, March, 1974, by 3,200 trade union women (and a few men) from 58 international unions. Open to members of bona fide collective bargaining organizations whether or not part of AFL-CIO. Constitutional Convention held December, 1975.

Purpose - encourage greater participation and voice by women in their unions, oppose discrimination at the work place, lobby for legislation important to unions and to women, and organize the unorganized.

Structure (1975) - five national officers, 15 regional vice-presidents, and a national executive board chosen at union caucuses at Convention with representation based on each union's CLUW membership; chapter representatives chosen locally also on board. The local chapters are the major arena of CLUW activity.

1974-75 officers: President, Olga Madar, United Auto Workers; Vice-President, Addie Wyatt, Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen; Treasure, Gloria Johnson, International Union of Electrical Workers; Secretary, Linda Tarr-Whelan, American Federation of State, County, Municipal Workers.

1976-77 officers: Madar, Wyatt, Johnson; Corresponding Secretary, Joyce Miller, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America; Recording Secretary, Patsy Fryman, Communication Workers of America.

CLUW activities - set up committees, hold classes, hearings, conferences which provide skill training, leadership experience, information, and which enhance women's ability and desire to play a greater role in their unions and improve unions' response to CLUW goals.

support strike and boycott picket lines with special interest in those relating to organizing and bettering work corditions of women.

lobby and demonstrate on legislative issues such as child care, health security, full employment, Equal Rights Amendment, and many others.

cooperate with feminist organizations on shared goals, spur greater awareness of women's economic concerns by feminists, media, and general public.

Attitude of labor movement - Strong back from a number of unions, ignored by some, programs for women (led by women) established by several internationals including the AFL-CIO (Cynthia McCaughan appointed by Meany as Co-ordinator of Women's Activities, Civil Rights Department); public

statements and resolutions in support by AFL-CIO nationally, some state bodies, and numerous internations; hostility by male unionists undoubtedly still exists in many quarters. In short, the vote is not yet in.

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